It is not my aim to detract from the hard work put in by many volunteer butterfly recorders, simply to highlight the difficulties for a national recording scheme in interpreting negative records. On the contrary, we are deeply indebted to thousands of recorders who devote so much of their spare time and expertise to maintain the distribution data sets upon which almost all conservation efforts for butterflies rely. However, on the eve of the 11th recording season for the Butterflies for the New Millennium project, it is an appropriate time to consider changes to the aims and methods and Butterfly Conservation (and our project partners) will revisit the question of negative records and see if there is any constructive way that these can be incorporated into the national recording scheme.— RICHARD FOX, Surveys Manager, Butterfly Conservation, Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset BH20 5QP.

Some potential recent Lepidoptera colonists in Suffolk

In the summer of 2002 singletons of *Cynaeda dentalis* (D. & S.) (Pyralidae) were recorded at light at two coastal sites in Suffolk with the initial record being mentioned in Langmaid and Young (2003. *Ent. Rec.* **115**: 249-272). Although there are references to this species occurring in Suffolk; Beirne (1952, *British Pyralid and Plume Moths*. Warne.), Parsons (1993. *A review of scarce and threatened pyralid moths of Great Britain*. JNCC) and Goater (1986. *British Pyralid Moths*. Harley); there appears to have been no recent records prior to 2002 and I have not been able to trace details of the record referred to in Beirne. As the foodplant, Viper's Bugloss *Echium vulgare*, occurs sporadically along the coast of Suffolk in 2003 I went searching for the cocoons formed by the larvae at the base of the foodplant. The tough cocoons, formed from shrivelled leaves of the foodplant, are reasonably easy to find if present, although groping around the bases of many Viper's Bugloss plants can be a rather prickling experience. In the end I found five cocoons in only one small area along the coast, near where one of the adults had been found at light. Three cocoons were taken home to confirm their identity and subsequently produced five adults, suggesting that cocoons may be shared by larvae and that a single plant may support more than one larva. In 2004 I repeated the search and found over fifty cocoons at the same site but again with no evidence of it occurring elsewhere along the coast. This leads to the question as to whether this species has been resident in the county undetected, possibly at low density, or whether it maybe a recent colonist or re-colonist. The site where the cocoons were found is a reasonably well recorded site, at least in terms of light-trapping effort, so if previously present it might have been expected to have turned up at light at some stage in the past. One might also have expected it to be present at other sites with the foodplant and similar habitats along the coast if it has been established for a long time in the county.

I am aware of two occasions of the Toadflax Brocade *Calophasia lunula* (Hufn.) being recorded at light in Suffolk; at Landguard (Nigel Odin & Mike Marsh, 2001) and at Rendham (Matthew Deans, 28 May 2004) and at the time these were thought

to be migrant records. After hearing of the 2004 Rendham record and while visiting another Suffolk coastal site a large stand of Common Toadflax *Linaria vulgaris* as noticed. Without much expectation of being successful Neil Sherman and myself visited the area on 4 September 2004 to search for larvae at night. This resulted, after sweeping and searching by torchlight, in three nearly fully-fed larvae being recorded. In the following week I heard from Nigel Cumings – he had seen two larvae at another coastal site on the same date but during the daytime. This raises the question as to the source of the records at light – were these migrants or wanderers from established colonies on the coast. As the species is reported to come to light poorly it may have remained un-detected for some period of time.

In recent years L-album Wainscot *Mythimna l-album* (L.) has been recorded from most of the regularly recorded Suffolk coastal sites; Landguard (Nigel Odin & Mike Marsh, 2000 to 2003), Orford Ness NNR (Jim Askins, 2002 and 2003) where regular recording started in 2001 and a single record from Dunwich Heath (Mark Cornish, 2002) where regular recording began in 2002. Recording at Bawdsey Manor, another coastal site between Landguard and Orford Ness NNR, was started on a regular basis in 2003 by Matthew Deans and a single L-album Wainscot was recorded on 1 October 2003. The use of MV light traps at the site was started in June 2004 and in June and July L-album Wainscot was recorded on three occasions (one on 16 June, two on 1 July, one on 8 July). The situation became more interesting when in September and October a total of 87 individuals were recorded at Bawdsey on fifteen nights between 10 September and 19 October. At Hollesley, a short way inland from Bawdsey, Nick Mason was also finding the moth in his MV trap, mainly singletons recorded on ten occasions between 13 September and 9 October. A single individual was also recorded by Matthew Deans on 22 September at East Lane, another coastal site a short distance north of Bawdsey. Searches with light at this time at Shingle Street and Aldeburgh, further north along the coast, all proved negative. Other records of the species in the county for the year include two at Orford Ness NNR on 5 and 9 October (Jim Askins) and at Landguard on 17 July, 27 September and 4 October (Nigel Odin & Mike Marsh). As the species was being recorded at Bawdsey on nights when other migrants were absent from the traps and considering the numbers and frequency of recording it would suggest the possibility of a local population. The lack of similar numbers of records at other coastal sites over the same period provides additional support to the idea of a population in the area of Bawdsey. It may also be that some recent records of this species at Landguard and Orford Ness NNR may have been local vagrants rather than migrants, as is normally assumed.

Future recording should hopefully help clarify the status of these species in the county and whether any local populations are more than just transitory. From a local recording viewpoint it is interesting that the three species discussed are resident on the south coast and it makes one wonder what else from this area might be expected to turn up in Suffolk.— Tony Prichard, 3 Powling Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP3 9JR. (E-mail: tony.prichard@btinternet.com)